

President Bush yesterday signed legislation authored by Congressman Xavier Becerra (D - Los Angeles) to rename the Oakwood Station Post Office in Los Angeles after the late Nat King Cole. Introduced in May of this year, H.R. 4797 received the co-sponsorship of 65 Members of Congress including the entire California congressional delegation. The bill passed the House and Senate unanimously earlier this year. "I am delighted that so many of my colleagues joined me in paying tribute to this icon in our community," said Rep. Becerra. "His name will now be etched into the memory of the neighborhood he called home," added the Congressman.

Representative Becerra asked residents surrounding the Oakwood Station Post Office to submit names of people they wanted to honor by renaming the station. These community members overwhelmingly chose Nat King Cole. Mr. Cole's family who still reside in southern California were thrilled with the selection and have been working with Congressman Becerra towards his effort. "I am honored to be able to work with the Cole family and all those in the community who wanted to commemorate his life. It is a fitting tribute to one of our own legends," said Rep. Becerra.

Nat King Cole's early career brought him to southern California which became his home. It was in Los Angeles, that he received the nickname "King Cole" and formed the group the "King Cole Trio." This trio signed with Capitol records in 1943 and recorded hits like "Straighten Up and Fly Right" and "For Sentimental Reasons." The trio disbanded in 1955 as Nat King Cole continued his solo career. It was at this time that he recorded songs like, "Answer Me, My Love," "Too Young," and "Unforgettable." "Certainly his music has left a lasting impression on American culture and his soothing baritone voice has touched people around the world, but it is his inspirational story of courage, determination, and resilience that strikes me most," commented Rep. Becerra.

"By any standard, Nat King Cole was a success" said the Congressman. "But we cannot forget the struggles he had to overcome as an African American performer during that period of our nation's history," continued Rep. Becerra. Nat King Cole

was born into the segregated south and would face racism throughout his life. In 1956, four members of the White Citizens Council attacked Cole while he was performing on stage in Birmingham, Alabama. Even though he was hurt, Cole finished the show. In Los Angeles, Nat King Cole and his family were the first to integrate into the exclusive Hancock Park section of the city where the residents of the all White community formed an association to keep the Cole family out. While the first African American to host a television show, his program was taken off the air after just one year with impressive ratings because advertisers would not support a Black host.

"We don't hear much about the obstacles that Nat faced when we listen to the story of his life. That's because he was always a gentleman and his triumphs so overshadowed the adversities he faced," said Rep. Becerra. "He is a model for many who would follow. Not only for the next generation of entertainers but for everyone. With his determination, he showed the world that whatever your race, whatever your wealth, however humble your beginnings, if you work hard and play by the rules you can achieve anything," commented Rep. Becerra.

The "Nat King Cole" Post Office will now stand as a memorial in our community to remind us of the story of Nat King Cole's incredible life. "This is an appropriate tribute to a man whose legacy is simply Unforgettable," said Congressman Becerra.

***A commemorative event including Congressman Becerra, Nat King Cole's family members, and community members is being planned for early December when the official plaque will be unveiled changing the post office's name. Specific details about this event will be released soon.***